

## Pekka Kuusisto

“He’s a huge, charismatic talent. Let’s see more of him.”  
– Richard Morrison, *The Times*, 2 February 2007

Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto is one of the most versatile and distinctive musicians working today. Always demonstrating his extraordinary individuality and imagination, Pekka is unusually free and fluid in his approach and has been acclaimed for the spontaneity and freshness in his playing. As Pekka puts it, “*I don’t play to be different or the same as anyone else, I just play it the way I think it and feel it.*”



In 1995, Pekka became the first Finn to win the Sibelius Violin Competition. He says of his country, “*I’m extremely proud that such a small country produced such a lot of really great music. Wherever I am, playing the Sibelius Concerto, I can see the landscapes of my homeland. It’s a bit like carrying around a small box of soil from your garden.*”

Pekka became Artist in Residence at the Tapiola Sinfonietta in September 2006, a post he took up along with pianist Olli Mustonen and conductor Stefan Asbury.

Setting Pekka apart from most other violinists of his generation is his desire and ability to improvise, and his love of playing many different styles of music, channelling the same intensity into each genre. He has worked in the past with Finnish electronic jazz group *Rinneradio* and Norwegian noise duo *Fe-Mail*, consisting of French horn and vocals, performing electronic music based on improvisation with live sampling. This season’s projects include the release of the first CD of *Kraft*, Pekka’s Finnish violin and accordion duo with Johanna Juhola, and the launch of *Tanabata*, a project with kantele player Eva Alkula and video artist Merja Nieminen which incorporates a Japanese fairy tale with Finnish traditional instruments and video. Also this season Pekka collaborates with the young Austrian multi-percussionist Martin Grubinger, with whom he performs at the Mozarteum Salzburg, Leipzig Gewandhaus and the Kamnagel in Hamburg. At New York’s Lincoln Center this season, Pekka gives a performance which combines Bach’s D minor Partita with electronic improvisation on chorale melodies.

Pekka is seen increasingly directing ensembles from the violin, and has excelled in this role with the London, Scottish and Irish chamber orchestras and the Britten Sinfonia, all of whom have re-invited him. Last season saw Pekka directing the Chamber Orchestra of Europe on a European tour, and in the current season he returns to the Australian Chamber Orchestra and makes his debut with the Zurich Chamber Orchestra. “*It’s about being a chamber musician, just like the other players. It’s the best way of ensuring there’s good communication between everyone. When I direct, I get feedback straight from the musicians and develop individual relationships with them.*”

Each summer, Pekka creates his own programme of events at Finland’s Lake Tuusula Chamber Music Festival, of which he is Artistic Director. In 2008, the festival welcomed mezzo-soprano Anne-Sofie von Otter and pianist Bengt Forsberg, and also saw the première of the *Tanabata* project and the *Reddress* installation by Korean artist Aamu Song. Pekka also introduced cinema accompanied by live music and sound-sensitive video art, and presented chamber music from both extremities of musical history as well as much in between.

As a concert soloist, Pekka continues to work with some of the world’s greatest orchestras and conductors, offering some fascinating contemporary repertoire as well as fresh insights into the core works. Important this season are Peteris Vasks and Magnus Lindberg, whose concertos are performed by Pekka with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and at the Casa da Musica in Porto respectively.

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Last season, Pekka Kuusisto undertook a recital tour of Australia for Musica Viva with pianist Simon Crawford-Phillips, with whom he performs again this season in a recital for BBC Scotland. Pekka was recently invited by Steven Isserlis to take part in a chamber music concert at the Wigmore Hall, where he performed alongside Martin Fröst. Pekka also undertook a recital tour of Japan for the Musashino Foundation with Finnish accordionist Janne Rättyä.

Pekka's most recent CD releases are two highly-acclaimed discs of works by Sibelius, of whom Pekka is a leading exponent: a disc of works for violin and piano, which he recorded in the composer's country home with Heini Kärkkäinen; and a recording of works for violin and orchestra, with the Tapiola Sinfonietta. Pekka also features in *4*, a DVD documentary about Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, in which he presents *Winter*, set in the snowscapes of Lapland. This season Pekka records a disc of works for violin and guitar by Niccolò Paganini on the Ondine label with guitarist Ismo Eskelinen.

Pekka Kuusisto plays a Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin of 1752 kindly loaned by the Finnish Cultural Foundation.

2008/09 season only. Please contact HarrisonParrott if you wish to edit this biography.